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ASSURED DESTRUCTION OF WHAT. A  
COUNTERCOMBATANT ALTERNATIVE TO  
NUCLEAR MADNESS

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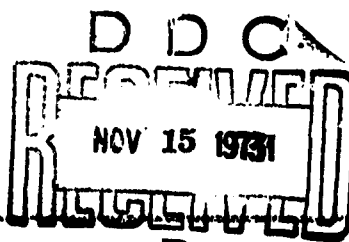
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34. ABSTRACT

This paper challenges the idea that the assured destruction capability of American nuclear deterrence must focus on enemy population centers. As an alternative it urges a "countercombatant" targeting capability and intention, directed to depriving an enemy of the ability to maintain internal security and security against hostile neighboring states, even though the latter might initially have been much weaker than itself. The specific targets would thus be internal security forces, military transportation and supply facilities, and tactical military forces and weapons centers. It is argued that such a retaliatory strategy would: 1. Offer prospects that any nuclear war occurring would be significantly less destructive than would one fought under counter-population strategy, 2. Not make nuclear war more probable than under the current strategy, 3. Be consistent with arms race stability, that is, it would not imply significant additional armament expenditures. Questions of probable Soviet reaction to adoption of such a strategy, and of domestic political support for it in the United States, are also considered.

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ASSURED DESTRUCTION OF WHAT?  
A Counter-Substant Alternative to Nuclear Madness

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Writing in Foreign Affairs in January of this year, Fred C. Iklé asked, "Can Nuclear Deterrence Last Out the Century?" and replied with an unfashionably pessimistic judgement. For most of us, our fears of mass destruction have eased since the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 and the heyday of arms control writing that was so influential about that time. We have come to regard nuclear deterrence as stable--an awful threat, but one so very unlikely to be executed that we can carry on, in reasonable security, under its shadow. Iklé reminded us, however, that the stability is not secure. It could be upset by any of the following, singly or in combination: a nuclear accident, which despite all precautions will forever have some possibility of occurring; crisis desperation by some otherwise "rational" leader; deliberate firing by a deranged leader or over-zealous subordinate (yes, there was a Hitler); or catalytic nuclear war initiated by a "have-not" smaller power with far less to lose and, at least in the mind of its leader, by some perverted value more to gain than a superpower could imagine. Most plausible is the interaction of several of these factors at an inopportune moment. Smaller powers,

for example, will not be able to afford all the highly sophisticated "fail safe" precautions of the superpowers, and regional antipathies may be more likely to plunge them into war.

At the moment all these dread possibilities really do seem distant. We have learned a great deal about how to deal with the bomb, and have spent enormous sums to avoid accidents. Technology has been kind, and its practitioners shrewd. Most of the developments of the last decade have favored the defense, providing confidence in a second-strike posture, able to ride out an attack or other threatening events so as not mistakenly to initiate a "retaliation" that would bring cataclysm. The Polaris-Poseidon submarine missile system is at the heart of this security, but bombers and land-based missiles still retain a great measure of invulnerability. Yet while this security may be with us now, and may even be reasonably assured for the next decade or so, only a very rash prophet would say it will last for several decades or a couple of generations--for example, for the lifetime of our children. It is possible that we may look back on this era with some nostalgia, as a period of virtually unique stability whose underlying conditions were lost. "This thing, too, may pass away."

The balance is built precisely on terror, the terror of death to the civilian populations of the United States and the Soviet Union. As phrased by Secretary McNamara in

DESTRUCTION STATEMENT A  
Approved by public authorities  
For use in the United States

his last posture statement in 1968, this means an American assured destruction capability of "one-fifth to one-fourth of the population, and one-half of the industrial capability," of the Soviet Union. Because of the greater urbanization and smaller land area of the United States, it is widely assumed that the corresponding damage this country would sustain from a Soviet strike would be greater. Furthermore, these estimates are acknowledged to be "conservative;" they include only the immediate casualties from the blast and heat of nuclear explosions, and not the deaths from fallout, secondary fire, sickness, and starvation that would surely follow. And again, the threat is posed primarily against civilian noncombatants: men and women who in the Soviet Union do not choose their government nor direct its actions, and wholly innocent children. No one who feels there is any possibility that deterrence just might fail, sometime, can avoid a sense of horror.

If we had no alternative, then by definition we would have to live this way. Many sophisticated observers act as though it were indeed the case. It is hard to be optimistic about radical disarmament proposals. The obstacles are enormous. Misconceived disarmament could weaken deterrence in an asymmetrical way, bringing on the war it was supposed to avoid. Even if the weapons were destroyed, the knowledge of how to build them never can be. How could the superpowers disarm without a multilateral agreement including other major

states? And the bureaucratic-political hurdles, the complex of arms interests in both this country and the Soviet Union, are hardly about to fold. As for bold unilateral disarmament initiatives, pacifism may appeal to some of us on an individual basis, but few are ready to raise personal preferences to the level of national policy. If you lived on the San Andreas Fault, and a job you could not leave required you to be there, it would be pointless for me to warn you of the dangers of earthquakes. Since you could neither control the natural forces nor remove yourself from them, it would be cruel, and perhaps counterproductive, for me to worry you. In the realm of nuclear strategy, reading even such a brilliant and moving statement as Khrushchev's could lead to despair or quite irrational behavior.

I contend, however, that we are not necessarily living on the equivalent of the San Andreas Fault; that there may be an acceptable alternative, short of unachievable radical disarmament or unacceptable radical pacifism, that deserves the closest and most openminded scrutiny we can muster. It requires that we recognize the ambiguity, in the term "assured destruction"--destruction of what--and ask whether the necessary target must in fact be civilian population centers. A failure to do this would make a policy of Mutual Assured Destruction deserve its acronym. Presumably the threat of destruction ought to be centered upon whatever it is that the enemy leadership holds most dear. Given some of the

leaders that all Bolsheviks are as callous toward their people as Stalin seemed to be, the insistence on assuring destruction of civilians seems a bit curious, especially since the top leaders themselves will be well protected and very likely to survive. Instead, might we not focus the threat upon the leaders' power: their ability to control and defend the state? I have proposed elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> and will expand on the idea here, that we consider substituting a strategy of assured destruction of the military and police powers of the Soviet state, rather than of population and civilian industry. I call the strategy a "countercombatant strategy" to distinguish it from the familiar counterforce strategy on the one hand, and countercity or counterpopulation strategies on the other. The term emphasizes an intention to strike against those kinds of targets traditionally, in the laws and ethics of warfare, regarded as permissible targets, while taking pains to minimize the death of non-combatant.

# II

Any proposal for arms control or a change in nuclear strategy must provide satisfactory answers to a set of three crucial questions. Those questions are:

1. See my "A Countercombatant Deterrent? Feasibility, Morality, and Arms Control," in Sam Parkesian, ed., The Military Industrial Complex: A Reassessment (Sage: Beverly Hills, 1972).

1. If the proposal were implemented, would it offer prospects that war would be less destructive, or at least not more destructive, than if the proposal were not implemented?
2. Does the proposal offer prospects that war would be less likely, or at least not more likely, than if it were not implemented?
3. Is the proposal consistent with arms race stability; that is, does it imply less, or at least not additional, armament expenditure?

In logic, the proposal must obtain an affirmative answer to the strong form of at least one of the preceding questions; that is, it must offer prospect of less damaging or less likely war, or fewer expenditures. If it also produces an affirmative answer to at least the weak form of the remaining two questions (no increment in war damage or likelihood, and no increment in spending) then the proposal will be dominant over the status quo. Presumably it should be implemented unless a still better proposal came along. But if the proposal produces an unfavorable answer to one or two of the questions, then some hard trade-offs have to be made. Would a diminution in the expected damage from war compensate for some increase in the likelihood of war, or vice versa? Or how much additional spending are we willing to undertake for the prospect of diminishing the expected damage or probability of war?

The proposal for a countercombatant strategy is directed at the first question, and does offer good prospects of a diminution in the total amount of damage, especially to civilians. Since no one can know how a nuclear war might be fought it does not answer the strong form of the question with certainty, but the probabilities seem good and in any case the amount of civilian destruction certainly would not be increased. The proposal does not offer much prospect of affirmative answers to the strong forms of the second and third questions, but I will try to present some reasons why at least it does not worsen the situation for either. That argumentation is unavoidably speculative and in some degree requires for greater certainty, detailed examination of information on weapons availability and development that is not publicly available. But I contend that the arguments are at the least sufficiently plausible to demand careful, extended analysis. And even should one of these questions be answered negatively in some moderate degree, the potential tradeoffs in potential war destruction may still make the proposal attractive. That decision would require very full debate--but we probably have time, and should use this period of strategic stability for the discussion of alternatives, not squander it under the illusion that the conditions of relative security will last forever.

A strategy of countercombatant targeting would certainly include these basic enemy nuclear striking forces and in-

mediate support facilities that are subject to attack under current strategy: military airbases, nuclear storage sites and perhaps missile silos, air-defense and ASM systems, submarine bases and nuclear submarines in port, and weapons-oriented atomic energy plants. It would not involve, however, any effort to extend anti-submarine warfare to effective attack on missile-launching submarines at sea, nor any incremental effort to attack land-based missiles. The reasons should be obvious--this strategy should be consistent with strategic stability, the confidence of Soviet leaders that they have an invulnerable second-strike force capable of surviving any hypothetical American first strike. Any degradation of this capability, or apparent degradation, might raise the risk of a possible "pre-emptive" Soviet first strike in a crisis, or stimulate the arms race into a new round of procurement of offensive and defensive systems. A countercombatant capability should neither be, nor appear to be, nor appear capable of becoming, a first-strike capability in the usual sense of counterforce.

But it need not be such a capability, simply because it depends primarily for its effectiveness not on a threat to enemy nuclear retaliatory capabilities, but to the enemy's ability to maintain internal security and to control its borders and neighbors by tactical means. Thus the special targets would be concentrations of troops and materiel for tactical military forces (nuclear and conventional), parti-

cularly these concentrations of sufficient size and isolation to be destroyed with minimum residual damage to the civilian population. Particular attention would be given to Soviet divisions in Eastern Europe and along the Chinese border, and to K.C.B. units, often of substantial size, for deployment against civilian unrest. Troops of China and the Soviets' East European allies would be carefully spared. Furthermore some military equipment and weapons-manufacturing plants would be targeted, as would selected tactical military headquarters, ammunition and supply centers, marshalling yards and repair facilities, transportation centers, pipelines and fuel distribution centers, and power plants. The purpose of all this is not simply to destroy the entire Red Army; that would be impossible and in any case quite unnecessary. The purpose, rather, is to destroy the effectiveness of Soviet conventional forces; in essence to destroy the Soviet government's ability to use troops. After a substantial number of the kinds of targets listed had been destroyed, the Soviet government would lack assurance that it could repress civil dissent, control its East European allies, or maintain its borders in Eastern Europe or, especially, with China. This would apply both immediately and, with the destruction of war industry over the longer run.

This strategy, then, would be directed against targets deliberately chosen for their political significance, and tailored to the particular domestic and international con-

ditions of the Soviet Union. Domestic dissent, especially in the urban metropolitan centers such as Moscow and Leningrad, is a problem for the leadership even if we do not credit the notion that the government is wildly unpopular. Moderate and slowly escalating damage to the power of the state, as occurred in World War II or to the Hanoi government more recently, frequently is associated with an ability to retain or even strengthen popular loyalty. No such assumption can readily be made about the effects of sudden, massive damage to the state that would both cripple police control and disrupt the flow of essential goods and services. The civilian population, escaping the direct personal losses that spawn political apathy, is likely to respond to indirect deprivation with active dissent against the weakened government. More serious is the continued existence of separatist sentiment in many of the republics, such as the Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, and the former Baltic states. A crippling of central authority would certainly revive such aspirations. The popularity of Soviet control in Eastern Europe also remains limited, and virtually every one of the U.S.S.R.'s European neighbors has a long-standing boundary dispute with it. Irredentist sentiment in Finland, Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Rumania would surely seek to exploit opportunities. The fact that Soviet troops are generally bivouaced in areas removed from East European forces and the local populations makes it easier to attack

them while trying East European capabilities. And the profound, perhaps even excessive, Soviet fear of China hardly needs emphasis.

As a result of this kind of strike, the Soviet government could find itself virtually helpless against a variety of forces which initially might have been quite weak. While it might retain substantial strategic nuclear capabilities, such forces would be useless against internal dissent, and of only marginal utility in holding Eastern Europe, where ground troops would be needed for occupation. In a world where China or other third powers had significant nuclear and conventional capabilities, the political potential of nuclear weapons alone would be sharply circumscribed.

I find it hard to imagine that the threat of such a counterbalancing retaliation could fail to constitute a very great deterrent to a Soviet attack on the United States or its major allies--very likely fully as much of a deterrent as is constituted by the threat of destruction to one-fifth to one-fourth of Soviet population and one-half of the industry. The latter are in great degree mere "magic numbers" anyway, not arrived at by any careful computation of what would in fact constitute the lowest level of psychologically "unacceptable damage" to the Soviet government. Rather, these figures represent points on the "cost curve" of American capability, beyond which marginal increments in the damage inflicted could be purchased only by very

great increments to American striking power. There is no compelling political rationale why they should be set there. Indeed, McNamara's earlier formulations, such as in his Posture Statement of 1965, set the requirement of assured destruction even higher, at "one-fourth to one-third of the Soviet population and two-thirds of the Soviet industrial capacity." The downward revision of these estimates seems to have been the result far less of any reassessment of the psychological criteria for deterrence than of changes in the cost curves.

Recognition that the criteria for assured destruction come as much from mythology as from science, and that what matters is not how much is damaged but how much that damage hurts, is essential to any consideration of whether a change in declared and intended targeting strategy would diminish deterrence. Furthermore--and I do not mean this to be a weasel way of having the best of both sides, but merely to state what is a fact--there is no way definitively to bury the threat of destruction of population centers. Whatever the peacetime intent of this or any succeeding American government, no one can be sure how it would react in the actuality of nuclear war and the fact of millions or tens of millions of American casualties. Especially the Soviet government cannot be sure. I most assuredly do not want to exploit this fear. For a variety of reasons I would like to see the American government have the capabilities and the

so as to minimize fallout (relatively "clean" weapons, exploded in the air rather than on the surface), and if they are of a size no greater than is necessary to destroy their military targets. So-called "bonus effects" would not be sought, and would be minimized. The American government could tolerate even greatly expanded Soviet civil defense efforts without fearing that the American deterrent was thereby being degraded. With relatively small warheads and high delivery accuracies, collateral damage to civilians in the neighborhood can generally be kept low.

Small warheads would generally be feasible because most of the targets listed above are relatively soft, unlike modern missile silos. Even accuracies of a quarter of a mile would permit a great deal of target discrimination. For example, a target hardened to 60 psi in overpressure will be destroyed by a 20 kiloton Hiroshima-sized bomb striking within a quarter of a mile of it. The same bomb would destroy frame houses up to about one and three-quarters miles away, but not much further. Continued improvement in accuracies to be expected in coming years would enable the use of still smaller warheads and consequent further reduction of the damage area. One authority recently put his estimate of achievable ICBM accuracies at 100 feet.<sup>2</sup> The combination

2. D. G. Hagag, "Ballistic Missile Guidance," in B. T. Feld, et al, eds., Impact of New Technologies on the Arms Race (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1971), p. 100.

real intention of sparing civilians so far as it possibly can. But there simply are no means by which a stake can be driven through the heart of the counterpopulation spectre, killing it beyond possibly any revival. For all these reasons I cannot see how this suggested change in the content of an assured destruction strategy would make nuclear war more likely through weakening deterrence.

There remains another version of the second question ("Would a countercombinant deterrent posture make war more likely?") which must be dealt with, but first we must satisfy ourselves that the first condition is truly met. Would a nuclear war fought under this strategy stand real prospects of being less destructive than one fought under current strategy? I have urged that the targets be military or quasi-military ones, and that no efforts be made deliberately to hit civilian population centers. Certainly no one could imagine that no civilians would be killed by execution of such a strategy. Some civilians, perhaps millions, would be in or so near the target areas that they would die in the initial strikes. Perhaps millions more would die from radioactive fallout and the civil disruption that would follow any large-scale nuclear war. But if we are talking about an attempt to limit civilian casualties rather than to seek them, the difference in the Soviet Union might be very great indeed, very possibly by an order of magnitude. This becomes true if nuclear weapons are chosen and employed

of small warheads and high accuracies, even with the latter nearer the current than the hypothetical end of the scale, would make it possible to strike, with a minimum of civilian casualties, military targets that were quite near urban centers. And for cases where such discrimination was not possible, one could simply refrain from striking at the military targets. After all, as I have emphasized the purpose of a countercombatant strategy need not be to destroy all military targets, but only "enough" to make the surviving military units essentially valueless. That level can be reached well below the level of 100 percent destruction. (A careful examination of the United States Strategic Bombing Survey of World War II supports this. While the bombing survey is frequently cited for support on all sides of questions like these, detailed study of it concerning the potential for countercombatant targeting is instructive.)

As he said that civilian casualties in the Soviet Union could be greatly reduced by American execution of such a strategy should nuclear war occur. I assume that ought to be a serious consideration for us, that we are not to be trifled by decades of cold war and ideological conflict that we do not care. Legal, ethical, and moral recommendations vary widely; but reason from a variety of normative

for John J. Mears, "Lessons of the Strategic Bombing Survey for Contemporary Defense Policy," reference to be supplied.

Premises. But virtually all require warriors to spare non-combatants wherever possible, to avoid needless civilian deaths. Should it be needless to threaten such killing, we ought to care about what would happen to Soviet civilians even if the Soviet government did not care about ours. But in fact there is reason to think the Soviet government might reciprocate, and be willing to limit American and European civilian casualties as well.

Soviet military doctrine is frequently ambiguous on these matters, but according to one expert, "Soviet targeting doctrine does not seem to reflect a basic preoccupation with population hostages for deterrence or with the deliberate destruction of population targets in war. However, the targeting doctrine includes an approach which generally mixes counterforce, counter-industry, and counter-administration. Soviet strategists have tended to emphasize the effect of attacks upon the social organization and the control net of the adversary, an approach which reflects, perhaps, their own emphasis on administration and control." Soviet leaders have repeatedly declared they are in a struggle with the American government and capitalism, not the American people. They consistently pictured ABM systems as desirable for preserving human lives, and Soviet abandonment of ABM in the

A. Johan Jorgen Holst, "Comparative U.S. and Soviet Deployments, Doctrines, and Arms Limitation," in Morton A. Kaplan, ed., SALT: Problems and Prospects (Morristown, N.J.: General Learning Press, 1973), pp. 71-75.

that if agreement does not necessarily mean repudiation of this view; their abandonment may equally well be due to the system's loss of its apparent infallibility. We cannot expect the Soviets to embrace all of the rather unflattering implications of a counterconfrontation doctrine. But we can, over time, try to educate them about its virtues. The goal of such an effort is to keep a counterconfrontation doctrine as part of some form of reciprocal demands the effort, and that we not try to keep a counterconfrontation intention as part of some secret plan.

If, accepting these precedents is their crime, the Soviets did attempt to reciprocate an American initiative of a retaliatory counterconfrontation doctrine, what might they consider to be appropriate targets for them? The political and military situation of the United States is all precisely appropriate to them. Americans like to think that domestic violence of the government depends less on police and military force than it does in the Soviet Union, and this country is thus perceived as a hostile neighbor of neighbors with recent territorial acquisitions. Destruction of American facilities, military or economic, has been a very recent precedent threat. Very probably the Soviet equivalent of a counterconfrontation target system would include a wider definition of counterconfrontation targets than the one I have suggested the United States government employ, additionally incorporating heavy industry, mining and other important bases of economic strength. Even so, that still is not quite the same as pure counter-

population strikes. Better for them to hit the River Rouge Ford plant than to hit Detroit.

Soviet reciprocation of the American initiative might come as an overt doctrinal acceptance, or in the absence of that at least in the form of city-avoiding behavior in the event war ever did come. The latter might be almost as advantageous as the former, and the pressures impelling it could be heavy. After all, American city-avoidance during the course of a war could be as contingent on Soviet reciprocation. Soviet cities would therefore remain as hostages to the Soviet government's continued restraint even after the outbreak of war. There would be moral as well as practical grounds to recommend initial American city-avoidance, since U. S. retaliation against cities, if it ultimately should occur, would then be in retaliation for attacks against cities, not just for any large-scale attack on the United States or its allies. Surely there is something a little disturbing about the threat that any large-scale strike, whether or not initially city-avoiding, might be met with a counterpopulation "retaliation."

Of course it is possible the Soviet government might refuse to reciprocate an American counterconfrontation policy, forcing the government in Washington to decide whether or not to maintain the policy. At the minimum, the real moral onus would be forced back on Moscow, since we would have tried. Anyway, only a rather thorough-going Soviet effort at non-

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requirement. I have already dealt with one aspect of the second question, whether it might make war more probable. I have tried to show that the assured destruction of Soviet military and internal security forces would, in the special context of that country's relationships, still provide an extremely powerful deterrent, possibly even a more politically relevant and therefore effective one than a threat posed primarily against cities. No one should imagine that the United States was growing soft in its deterrent resolve, or that the damage level would be so low that any rational opponent would willingly accept it. But there remains another version of the second question. Would the size and nature of the American deterrent force be such as to look like, or perhaps even be, a force capable of executing a "damage-limiting" first strike against the Soviet Union, in the sense of a capability for limiting the strategic nuclear damage the Soviet Union could inflict in retaliation? If so, we noted that the result might be to disrupt strategic stability by tempting the Soviet Union into a "pre-emptive" attack in a time of crisis. Or another consequence, instead of or in addition to that, could affect the third question. Would this lead to major acquisitions of new defensive and/or offensive systems, thus destroying any precarious arms race stability?

liberal arms control community who worked so hard and put so much money into the program by passing the legislation. The liberal arms control community who worked so hard and put so much money into the program by passing the legislation.

day accuracy levels can be frozen anyway; development improvements continue on both sides, and inspection to enforce any agreement would be extraordinarily difficult. Nor does there seem to be much prospect for any agreement to prevent the MIRVing of existing missiles or their replacements.

There is some consolation in the fact that MIRV is not comparable, at least given the size of most American launch vehicles, with very large warheads. The MIRVed Poseidon missiles, for example, are expected to have warheads in the 50 kiloton range. Even with increased accuracy their limited explosive power offers some degree of protection to well-hardened missile sites. But finally, we must recognize that the day of land-based immobile missile systems is passing in any case. While their demise will not come tomorrow, in the long run a secure deterrent must rest on submarine-based missiles or some exotic new technology, and perhaps to a lesser degree on alert aircraft and mobile land-based missiles. To forego a countercombatant strategy just because it might seem to pose a threat to fixed-site missiles would be a purely quixotic gesture.

Thus the third question: would new pressures from the weaponizers, both the military and their civilian allies, on both sides, be released by adoption of a countercombatant strategy? My answer to this question is the least confident, though I see no reason why the answer has to be unacceptable. First, although I have presented a rather long shopping list

12

successfully to secure the two kinds of stability we now have. Those who fought for the principle of mutual assured destruction, with its undoubted benefits as well as its long-term risks, ought not to want it lightly abandoned. The pressures, domestic as well as international, for a new round of strategic arms acquisition are not imaginary.

The risk of inadvertently using a first-strike threat depends upon what steps each side takes to protect its own nuclear retaliatory force or to make it more vulnerable than its opponent. There is nothing in the targeting system I proposed above that would provide either side with new damage-limiting capabilities. The primary targets explicitly are not intended to be strategic delivery vehicles. Nevertheless it is possible that major qualitative improvements in striking power, or major new acquisitions in numbers of weapons, could degrade some kinds of retaliatory forces. The most vulnerable, of course, are the land-based fixed-site ICBMs on either side. They would become more vulnerable to warheads of greatly improved accuracy (which would otherwise be desirable for their potential to limit collateral damage to civilians) or to a very great increase in the number of potential attacking warheads, especially as a result of MIRVing.

Major improvements in accuracy probably are not necessary to make very great reductions in the probable level of civilian casualties. Yet it is hard to imagine how present-

of types of targets for a countercombatant strategy, that does not mean that an enormous number of each type would have to be struck. I have repeatedly emphasized that to destroy the utility of a military machine need not require the physical destruction of all of it. It is quite possible to produce military chaos, and to make opportunities for the domestic and neighboring enemies of the Soviet regime, without killing anything like every last Russian soldier or destroying every last Red Army tank. The strategy instead requires concentrating on the facilities for commanding, supplying, and transporting those troops and tanks. Second, no one should underestimate the numerical strength of existing or already projected American retaliatory forces. With MRV's, Poseidon, Polaris, and Minuteman, plus the bombers in the Strategic Air Command, the United States will have about 8000 warheads targeted on the Soviet Union at any one time. The majority of those will be on vehicles, primarily submarines, with a very high probability of surviving any Soviet first strike, and probably will not have to face an effective Soviet ABM system. Nor does this figure include shorter-range land or sea-based aircraft and missiles which could play a significant role in executing a countercombatant retaliation along the periphery of the Soviet Union. Without indulging in the rhetoric of overkill, is that not enough of a force utterly to cripple, at any desired level of assurance, Soviet military power and leave that country almost naked

13

to its enemies?

I grant that this last question cannot be answered definitively from the unclassified literature, though I think a very strong presumption for a favorable answer does exist. At the very least, it would be utterly irresponsible to dismiss the countercombatant proposal on these grounds without the most careful and dispassionate study of its implications for weapons acquisition.

I should grant, too, that a very great virtue of present strategic doctrine is that it does provide a reasonably clear answer to the question of how much is enough. Defined in terms of percentages of population and industry, which are themselves a function of the cost curves, one has a ready and plausible brake to the ambitions of the arms hucksters. Doubtless this very fact recommended the doctrine to its original proponents, and the brake should not lightly be cast aside. It does seem unlikely that the cost curves for military targets, as proposed for a countercombatant strategy, would give quite such a neat solution. Some demands for new arms acquisitions probably would be forthcoming, using the new strategy as an excuse if not a reason. But there are also important counterpressures that did not exist ten years ago. The SALT agreements provide some constraint. Furthermore, opinion, both in government and in the public at large, is much more skeptical toward military spending than it has been at any time since the beginning of World War II.

Public opinion data can illustrate the point. In the most recent (February 1973) Gallup Poll on this topic, 42 percent of the people declared that the United States ought to be spending less for defense; only 8 percent thought it should spend more. Considering that the immediate irritant of the Vietnam War had passed, this is not markedly lower than what was found from 1959 to 1971, when repeated pollings turned up a steady 50 percent of the populace saying that military spending ought to go down. It contrasts sharply with the earlier era, when for three decades virtually every poll found fewer than 20 percent of the population desiring a cut in military spending. Moreover, the new skepticism about military spending is strongest among the more attentive, highly educated, and business and professional portions of the population. For instance, 49 percent of business and professional people said that too much was being spent on defense, compared with 40 percent for the rest. And in my own survey of almost 600 major corporation vice presidents last April, 51 percent wanted to see the defense budget cut, and only 20 percent wanted an increase. Thus antimilitary feeling is concentrated precisely in that part of the populace most likely to vote, to express opinions, to make campaign contributions, and to participate in some form of organized political activity. It should pose a powerful restraint on overzealous activities by the arms merchants.

And ultimately we should face the matter of tradeoffs

squarely. Of course we should be concerned with avoiding wasteful spending on strategic weapons systems. Of course the competing priorities in this country have very strong claims to resources. I think I have, in my previous writings of the past few years, established my own credentials as one concerned with holding down and reducing Pentagon spending. But if it comes to that, shouldn't we be willing to spend something to get out from under the current awful threat to civilian populations throughout the Northern hemisphere? Is prudence, is morality, of interest only if it costs us nothing?

#### IV

It is not enough that a countercombatant strategy make strategic good sense. It also must make political sense within the domestic systems of the superpowers, most notably within the United States. The preceding discussion has covered some of these points, especially the pressures and counterpressures for new weapons purchases. But there is more to it. Is there a potential political base for such a proposal in the United States, and if so how is it composed?

The idea of a countercombatant strategy is not uniformly popular in circles traditionally concerned with arms control. In part this results from a lack of clarity about some of its implications, primarily what I believe to be the misconception that the strategy change would lead to strategic

or arms race instabilities. Its acceptability will be enhanced to the degree its proponents can demonstrate its feasibility without major quantitative or qualitative additions to existing capabilities. Another problem, however stems from the correct perception that the counter-combatant proposal would not for the foreseeable future lead to major reductions in strategic force levels or acquisitions. In the long run, conceivably the United States and the Soviet Union might be able to negotiate a drop to a much lower assured destruction capability on both sides, and efforts in that direction should continue. But despite some recent encouragement their success seems well in the distance. Until then force levels would have to remain high under the exigencies of a counter-combatant strategy. Those who place a very great value on force or expenditure cuts therefore will not be pleased with the proposal. Yet as I have suggested, there are other priorities and the goal of major arms reduction should not necessarily override powerful strategic and moral considerations.

Opposition may also come from quite another source. Implementation of a counter-combatant strategy requires very close attention to controlled response, flexibility, and an extremely well articulated command and control system, with special concern for control by the top civilian leadership. In principle such control exists, and the current Administration has repeatedly stated the need for flexibility. It is

45

not apparent, however, that the doctrinal capability in fact exists. That is, the physical communications capabilities may be present, but if there is not substantial thought and planning, well in advance of a crisis, a President may nevertheless find himself confronted with making a choice from a very limited range of options which the military command is really prepared to carry out. One thinks, for example, of the elaborate French, German, and Russian mobilization plans of 1914, and the inability of civilian authorities to execute partial or localized mobilizations that did not immediately threaten their opponents' security. Actually providing the needed flexibility in the nuclear-age strategic operations plan might require intervention, by the President and his immediate advisers, into realms of strategic planning normally considered the responsibility of military officers. A clash about questions of military professionalism and civil-military relations over the issue is conceivable.

On the other hand, several potential sources of support for an emphasis on counter-combatant deterrence exist. There is a widespread if virtually silent sense of moral revulsion in this country against counterpopulation deterrence. It remains largely silent so long as no viable alternative seems to exist, but presentation of a seemingly feasible counter-combatant alternative could cause much of this latent feeling to become manifest. At least passive

support could be found among groups whose interests might seem threatened by disarmament proposals. A counter-combatant strategy would not involve major reductions in strategic force levels. Moreover, some who worry about the continued effectiveness of counterpopulation deterrence in light of Soviet countermeasures, such as civil defense and evacuation plans, might actually feel reassured by a shift in strategy that emphasized military targets. The passive support of such groups must not become an excuse for enormous new weapons procurement, but it is simply a fact that any new strategic consensus will have to be broadly based. Finally, there is something about a posture of mutual massive counterpopulation destruction that is subtly but profoundly subversive of the authority of the modern state. In the event of a failure, it not only would admit but would exploit the state's failure to secure the most fundamental interest of its subjects--their lives. Long-term appreciation of this fact may produce some surprising advocates of change.

At the moment there is no broad-based political constituency for a countercombatant deterrent strategy. It lacks the kind of popularity that greeted such recent Administration moves as the opening to China or the SALT treaty, and would stimulate searching and perhaps acrimonious discussion. Nevertheless there are important precedents for concern with the issue. It was hotly debated in the B-36 vs.

16

aircraft carrier debate of 1949, when the Navy insisted that counterpopulation bombing would be immoral as well as ineffective. While much of this argument may have been self-serving, its impact should not be forgotten. A similar initiative is associated with Secretary McNamara in 1962, particularly his famous Ann Arbor speech calling for graduated response. That initiative failed, in large part because it came at a time of American nuclear superiority and was linked with counterforce doctrines of damage-limitation. Such a strategy and capability was seen as destabilizing, and widely criticized. But the counter-combatant strategy I have suggested here comes at a time of essential Soviet-American parity, and explicitly renounces the notion of seeking a damage-limiting capability. It should not be rejected with arguments that do not apply.

There are some signs that the Administration is trying to shift in this direction, albeit while perhaps still toying--dangerously--with the notion of damage-limitation. One certainly should not infer too much from Fred Ikle's nomination to head the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency. There are a number of possible good reasons for that appointment. Yet his cri de coeur about assured destruction surely came at a significant moment. And President Nixon himself declared, in his Annual Report on Foreign Policy for 1975, "If war occurs--and there is no way we can absolutely

guarantee that it will not--we should have means of preventing escalation while convincing an opponent of the futility of continued aggression." Still more pointedly, "While the specter of an unacceptable response is fundamental to deterrence, the ability to kill tens of millions of people is not the only or necessarily the most effective deterrent to every challenge.... Moreover, the measure of the effectiveness of our strategic forces in terms of numbers of dead is inconsistent with American values." That remains a point to remember.